



School Counselor on the Go Webinar Series - Education and Advocacy for ES/MS During the Budget Crisis and COVID-19

May 27, 2020

Q: Mr. Compton, we have been told in RUSD we are fine for this year. I have also heard other districts tell their counselors there are no current cuts. However, your graph earlier shows that budget cuts take 1-2 years to take effect. Does that mean that School Counselors should wait and think we are "safe" however start advocacy now if not currently doing so? Asking for my SC friends...

A: The recommendation is to not wait and to instead be proactive and be involved as soon as possible. Districts typically have reserves to help offset budgets and if this is the message being brought forth, that is good news. However, this does not mean it is time to relax and wait. It is an opportunity to be proactive and understand what the strategy and game plan are, moving forward.

Q: How are seniority lists determined?

A: Generally speaking, seniority is based on the hire date in the job classification into which employees are hired. Additional criteria are considered and negotiated between the Union and Management when multiple staff hold the same hire date. Often, the labor contract contains language describing seniority for job transfer and other work related transactions. While this language may not be specifically used for layoff purposes, it sheds light on the past practice and discussions between the Union and Management. Individuals are strongly advised to consult directly with site and district representatives regarding this.

Q: How strong are parents' advocacy/voice to sustain counselors?

A: While parent voice is critical in terms of advocating for school counselors and the essential role they play, they are stronger when supplementing data-driven, evidenced-based practices. Showing effectiveness through outcomes (i.e. graduation rates) has a much bigger impact.

Q: At the elementary level, how do you recommend this needs assessment be deployed? Since kindergartners-2nd graders may struggle to read questions?

A: At the elementary level, a few suggestions would include providing the assessment to parents in lieu of the students since they may not understand the wording and possibly modifying the language to incorporate more visuals for students to better comprehend the information. This could also include pre-recorded instructions for younger students.

Q: Do you have any sample needs assessment?

A: You are leaving today with a sample and also an entire question bank of needs assessment questions. We will be providing you a bank of questions for both students and parents to support your action plan for the coming school year.

Q: In elementary - difficult to show graduation rate, so what type of questions in elementary can we capture for our data, besides how many kids served, lessons etc.?

A: We will show a sample one for elementary students. Remember you can use bitmojis, or recordings for little ones and emojis to fit the grade level.

Q: How do we access this presentation for the needs assessment again?

A: Please visit us at www.rcec.us and create a free account to access the powerpoint. All webinars and documents can be downloaded at www.rcec.us we will review the directions in a bit.

Q: What is the best way to get the needs assessment out to parents during the closure?

A: To have parents fill out surveys we covered that in the previous slide, use school website, phone dialer, email, school social media, parent groups (PTA/ELAC/SSC), etc. Some ideas to get the needs assessment out are to use email, remind 101, and google classroom to share the link to complete the needs assessment.

Q: I sent out a needs assessment for my parents and used emails and social media to get the assessment out and got a low response from parents. Just wondering if there are any ways to increase the input/parent participation.

A: You can also add parents to Remind and import emails so they receive it as a text, Works very well or use Google Voice to send out a message. If your principal sends out a weekly update, they can include the link in there as well to increase the communication to parents.

Q: How do you ensure students are actually utilizing the school counselor's Google Classroom? I feel like this can be viewed as an "optional" choice for students instead of a 'must do' option.

A: Google Classroom has a data feature that shows you percent & number of visitors and participation. This helps account for your students during distance learning.

Q: Where is the feature for visitors and participation?

A: Research usage reports for google classroom.

<https://support.google.com/edu/classroom/answer/7283376?hl=en>

Q: Are counselors welcome in negotiating meetings?

A: Yes they can participate and should participate. Connect with your site level rep ASAP.

Q: How much notice do districts have to give certificated staff?

A: It is strongly recommended that individuals seek guidance from union representatives at the district and site level regarding layoff notices.

Q: With the budget cuts that are expected, and the proposed opening of the schools, how are schools going to budget for all the CDC recommendations, such as retrofitting schools with plexi-glass and/or partitions where needed. Extra personnel to clean and sanitize and supervise and monitor for COVID-19, as well a PPE for staff and students, and many more other expenses?

A: This is a great question that still remains to be answered but it is one that districts are currently examining with regard to cost. Given the current need to sustain cleanliness within the school and classroom setting, districts are examining the most cost effective ways to ensure student and staff health.

Q: My school year starts before August 15th. This means that it is a possibility of being laid off after the school year begins?

A: The August 15 lay-off notice is exercised when a district is experiencing fiscal crisis. The chances for that are slim but the question should be "is this something being discussed?" Please consult with your site representatives and union representatives for more specific information about current negotiations.

Q: What strategies can we explore with District and when?

A: Be as proactive as you possibly can and learn the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) so that you understand the language around efforts to represent school counselors. get involved with your site level representatives to be able to advocate for your job and have a seat at the table as next action steps arise.

Q: Do you know if there are negotiations about retirement?

A: That is district specific. Reach out your site rep or union representatives.

Tips and Tricks

We share with students and parents through our student portal, Q communications for students to check their google classroom because we are providing support and we are posting ongoing information.